

LINE STUDIO AT WMS

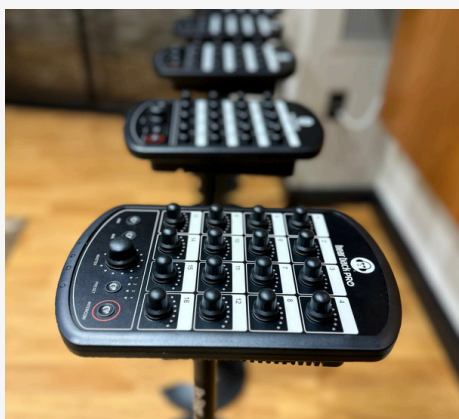


Photo credit: Sam Fong/
Line Studio at WMS

In one of the most isolated places on the planet, reliable equipment is essential. Line Studios, a world-class recording studio recently opened on the campus of Washington Middle School in Honolulu, HI, is teaching students and the community how to work in a real-world studio environment.

An unusual studio with a community mission

Studio Director Sam Fong's enthusiasm for the new studio and its education goals is contagious. His face lights up as he shares the studio's backstory and its mission.

"A studio like this in a public school system is really unusual," Fong said. "We have everything that you can think of that can operate at a very high level, and it's designed by the best designer [Walters-Storyk Design Group]. It sounds great, and you can really learn how to be a professional in this facility. That's really the drive of the studio, create a contextualized learning environment" that mirrors a real-world situation.

They took their time to do it right, creating a space that's not geared toward any particular age group. That way, everyone can learn from it. "If you build the best, you'll reach a much broader audience of learners, educators, and audience."

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Once the studio was completed, the studio team brought in adults from across the school district, such as principals, to demonstrate how the students would learn in an immersive studio classroom. Then, groups of students, community members, professional artists, nonprofit groups, and more joined in to make it an even more real-world scenario.

“They all contribute to helping our students learn how real recording sessions happen,” he said. “How does an audio engineer, the producer, the composer, how do we communicate with each other, how do we deal with each other how do we interact with each other. That’s all very important for students to learn.” In music production classes, teachers can convey concepts, but getting hands-on in the studio is even better. “It’s great to show them, but it’s better if they can interact with something. [...] Now they can experience what artists really experience when they sing and hear themselves on a large diaphragm microphone, for example. This is education.”

How the Hear Back PRO helps

“The Hear Back [PRO] system is a big part of it,” Sam said. “You can’t have a fully functioning studio without an excellent monitoring system. That’s why we chose the Hear Back.”

The studio team didn’t want equipment that would be too complicated to learn and therefore take up valuable time learning the bigger picture. So, the Hear Back PRO’s knob-based, easy-to-use interface made sense.

“I have designed systems for churches and different venues, we have used different brand names,” Sam said. “The reason why we chose Hear Back is the fact that it’s so simple to use. You don’t have to read the manual, you can figure things out, it’s designed to do that. It’s very intuitive.”

Line Studio at WMS feeds 16 channels from its SSL console to the Hear Back PRO Hub using the Hub’s analog input option. From there, the Hub sends the signal to 8 Hear Back PRO Mixers positioned in isolation rooms and the live room. The Hear Back PRO Mixers have the PRO Digital Overlay labeling accessory installed, so each channel has an easily readable digital labeling screen.

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The studio's Hear Back PRO Hub also has an ADAT input card that they might use in the future.

The studio team is still digging into the Hear Back PRO's features and what it's capable of. "We just ran a really big serious recording session. [...] It ran flawlessly," he said. If the more than 40 artists hadn't been able to hear themselves, the track, or the metronome properly with that many musicians, "Holy cow, we would have completely collapsed. It wouldn't matter what kind of speakers we have or what kind of console you use, the cue system is really important. So, the Hear Back just ran flawlessly."

Technical support and reliability are also important in such an isolated place as Hawaii. "Having really fantastic people, having gear you can rely on, operating in a very stressful situation, and adding on education, I'm just very grateful for the system. I'd give it five stars."

